



(Here is the requested article. You may view, print, download or copy and paste this article with no charge. Please review the copyright guidelines for usage restrictions. To get back to Archive Tulsa, hit the back button at the top of this page.)

Poultry lawsuit expense mounts

BARBARA HOBEROCK World Capitol Bureau

08/24/2005

Tulsa World (Final Home Edition), Page A1 of News

But the attorney general says don't fret: Firms hired by the state will be paid out of any recovery.

OKLAHOMA CITY -- Attorney General Drew Edmondson said three private law firms that his office has hired to pursue a water-quality lawsuit against 14 poultry companies have spent more than \$1 million so far.

"None of that is state money," Edmondson said Tuesday. "All of that has been borne by the firms. Under our contract, the firms collectively have a one-third contingency on any recovery."

Edmondson and the out-of-state poultry firms announced last week that mediation in the long-running dispute had failed, and the attorney general said he would move forward with a lawsuit that was filed in June.

Edmondson alleges phosphorus in excess chicken litter spread as fertilizer runs into eastern Oklahoma watersheds, which chokes aquatic life, causes algae blooms and creates taste and odor problems in drinking water.

"I think this is an excessive amount with the high-dollar, out-of-state lawyers involved," said Bev Saunders, manager of Poultry Partners, a group of poultry growers that includes about 400 family farmers and members. "I guess we should expect it. I think it is too bad this money could not be used for some good, sound environmental practices or to support the family farmers who are now at risk of losing their homes, their farms and their livelihood because of this lawsuit."

The poultry companies declined to comment.

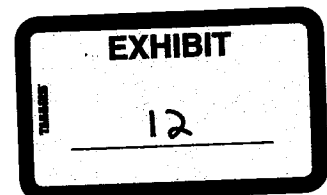
The law firms being used on the state suit are Motley Rice of South Carolina; Riggs, Abney, Neal, Turpen, Orbison and Lewis of Oklahoma City; and Miller and Keffer of Tulsa, said Charlie Price, a spokesman for Edmondson.

Noted Tulsa attorney Louis Bullock is also working for the state on the case because of his trial and federal court expertise, Edmondson said.

Motley Rice was hired because it has the financial resources to handle the case, the attorney general said.

"The enormous cost of the litigation made that necessary," he said.

The Oklahoma City firm was hired because of its trial expertise, while the Tulsa firm was hired



because of its experience with environmental law, Edmondson said.

"This was after a process of receiving proposals from a number of law firms with a nonnegotiable part from the state that in no event will this cost the state money," Edmondson said.

Some attorney general's staff members have also been working on the case, Price said.

"I think the poultry growers that have concerns that I can appreciate should be speaking to the companies and not to me," Edmondson said. "We have bent over backwards to settle this case. The companies have not."

Barbara Hoberock (405) 528-2465
barbara.hoberock@tulsaworld.com

Copyright © 2007, World Publishing Co. All rights reserved.

[Back to search results](#)